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**Montana Pupil Transportation
News and Updates
January/February 2004**



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A Bi-Monthly Newsletter Published by Pupil Transportation, School Budgeting and Accounting Division

Since You Asked

Those Strobe Lights are driving me crazy. Why are the drivers running with them on all of the time?

The Pupil Transportation Advisory Panel had safety in mind when they required strobe lights to be installed in all buses ordered after 08/16/2002. The intent of the Advisory Panel was for drivers to use the strobes during periods of low visibility and in areas where the driver needed the strobe to make oncoming traffic more aware of the bus.

Some school districts around the state have been running the buses with the strobes on all the time. The motoring public is beginning to complain a lot about the problems that are caused by the strobes. In town where there is other lighting to off set some of the eye stress, it isn't so bad but in the rural areas where the strobe is the only light you see, it is causing some real eye strain problems. Motorists who have to follow a bus with the strobe on will take unusual chances to pass or will lower their visor so they can't see the strobe. Either case could certainly cause unsafe situations. If a driver can't see the strobe, you can bet that they can't see the reds either.

School bus drivers should use the strobes during periods of low visibility, at bus stops for greater visibility or in areas where a driver wants the on coming traffic to be more aware, for instance when loading or unloading at the bus stop.

When will OPI make the 1st semester transportation reimbursement payment?

The first semester transportation reimbursement will be sent to the county treasurer on March 23. Transportation is included when the State Aid payment is paid. Please make sure that all of the drivers had current certifications and all buses were inspected for the first semester.

Check the TR-1 (Bus route and reimbursement form) to ensure the bus actually used on the route. The TR-1 was preprinted this year to help districts report more consistently, however it is still up to the district to make sure that everything on the form is accurate. If needed, all amended TR-1 reports should be submitted as soon as the amendment is complete. Amendments must be submitted when there is an increase in mileage or a change in the bus used on the

route. These changes may require additional budget authority and county transportation committee approval.

Deadlines are very important in the months leading up to the reimbursement payment date. The TR-5s and TR-6s are due to the county superintendents by February 1, 2004 and are due to the OPI on February 15, 2004. The turn-around time is very short between the due date and the payment date. Please make every effort to have the TR-5s and TR-6s completed, signed and submitted to the OPI by the deadline.

If you have questions regarding this information, please call Maxine at (406) 444-3096.

Other Issues

I received a call recently about **cracked frames** on two International buses. Both are high mileage vehicles in rural areas. The Montana Highway Patrol spotted the cracks while doing a 2nd semester bus inspection. The buses have been taken out of service.

The damaged area on the front is right behind the shock mounts and in front of the spring hangers. We couldn't find any recalls on this issue, however it would be a good idea to take a look at **all** regular route buses. Please let me know if you find any other cracks, as I would really like to know that these are isolated cases.

Quote of the Month

"Only two things are infinite, the universe and human stupidity, and I'm not sure about the former."

- Albert Einstein (1879-1955)

Thanks to everyone for PROMPTLY RETURNING THE TRAINING VIDEOS

The new contact for ordering training videos is:

Raelen Williard at the OPI Resource Center. Raelen's phone number is (406) 444-2082. Raelen can be reached by email at rwilliard@state.mt.us or fax at (406) 444-3924.

This change will allow us to serve districts more quickly. The Resource Center has everything in place to cut the turn-around time to a minimum and allow more districts to utilize

the tapes. I ask for your help to only order what you need, order when you are going to use the tapes and return them promptly.

Before you call Raelen, go to the transportation website at www.opi.state.mt.us/pupiltransport for the list of tapes. It is important for you to know which tapes you want when you call to order. We simply don't have time to monitor each districts' needs.

TRANSPORTATION WEB SITE HAS A NEW LOOK

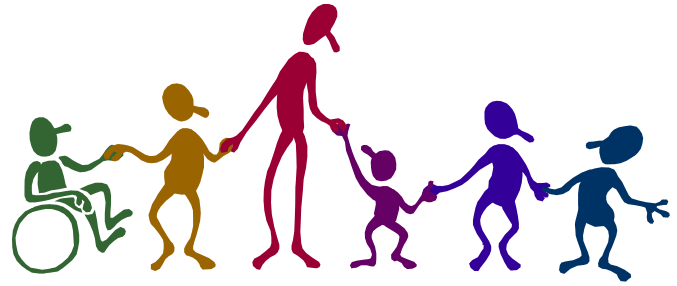
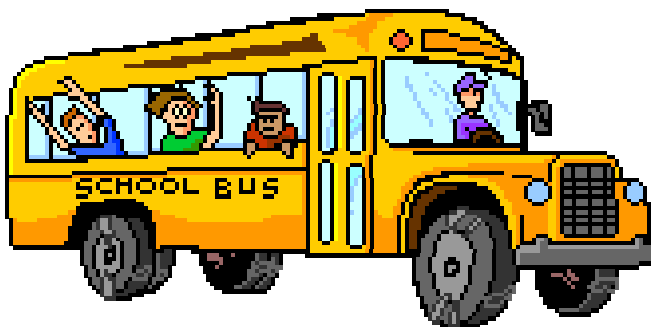
Check it out – go to www.opi.state.mt.us/pupiltransport and see what you can find. Our Informational Services Division works hard to keep the web sites current and all the links working appropriately.

Notice at the bottom of the list is a new document titled *Transportation Contact Directory*. Please open the document, find your district and see if the information is correct. Send me an email at mmougeot@state.mt.us if there is information that needs to be corrected. I haven't updated this file in a while so some things may need attention. If the district has a transportation director, please use that person's name and information rather than using the district superintendent's name.

Transportation directors are using this document as a resource for bus drivers when they need help with a disabled bus while on the road. The information is not complete because some schools did not return the original survey.

I use this document as a handy phone directory when I need to contact transportation directors. If you have questions or suggestions regarding the web site, please call me at (406) 444-3096 or fax (406) 444-0509 and email is mmougeot@state.mt.us.

School bus drivers are working hard to keep our kids out of harm's way. Be sure to thank the drivers for the awesome job they do.



IMPORTANT DATES

February 1, 2004 - All corrections for school bus inspections, driver certificates, bus routes and Individual Transportation Contracts should be made to the OPI in preparation for the 1st Semester Transportation Aid Reimbursement

February 1, 2004 - Completed TR-5's and TR-6's due to County Superintendent

February 15, 2004 - Completed TR-5's and TR-6's due to OPI

March 23, 2004 - Transportation Aid Reimbursement made to Counties for distribution to schools

March/April 2004 - TR-4's, Pre-printed Individual Contracts are sent to districts for ensuing year

April 2004 - New bus driver listing sent to districts

June 23, 24, 25, 2004 – MAPT Conference in Lewistown, MT – Contact Betty Kunkel at (406) 454-6776.



Update driver certificates, bus inspection forms, route information and Individual Transportation Contracts information regularly.